

[Gor Svenson #4]

LIVING LORE Wheeler

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(Continuing record of interviews with Gor Svenson, 62, Swedish-born American lobsterman who for most of his adult years was a quarry-worker in Gloucester and Rockport, Mass.) "It was maybe five years ago, I guess [?] I remember that [morning?] all right. It was morning after [??] [make transition?] I get up five, maybe six o'clock have coffee, go down Cove, take my gas launch, go see my lobster pots. I have twelve, fifteen pots then down off Andrew's Point. It is not far from where summer people come see the surf make what they call Spouting Rock. I remember one time I go into place near First National that Captain Mitchell his wife he's dead now got. I go in there get some Copenhagen (a brand of snuff, popular locally) and in there he's got good picture that Spouting Rock. I say, " How much? " He says, " Seein' it's you, Gor, I give you it for penny. Anybody else I give it him for penny, too. " Very funny feller, that Captain he's dead now, his wife nice woman she's dead too, he always make joke. *

" I [Once?] buy that picture that Spouting Rock it is picture you put in post-office they send it some feller you know, say, " Here [I?] am. How are you? " Once back war-time I get picture like that come all way from [Germany?]. Feller I work with those Germans they got him in prison there. Only it is not picture of that Spouting Rock. It is picture of that feller. I don't know where it is now. If I had it now I show you, you do not think I tell you something never happened. It was good picture. Look just like that feller you think it bite you. *

"I take that picture Spouting Rock hang up in back-house. I put it on door so I can look at it. Funny thing hundred times I look that picture, never once I go down look at that Spouting Rock. I do not think 2 Spouting Rock much to look at anyway. Just for summer

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people. They look at anything, those summer people. Sometime even, I am down in Cove my boat, they stand there, those summer people, look at me. You think they never see Swede feller before. They go Sweden, by gosh, see enough Swede-fellers all right! More Swede-fellers in Sweden than Finns on Stockholm Avenue! * "I never see that feller send me his picture again. Maybe after war he go back to Sweden, harr? I go back to Sweden sometime me, too. Sometime rich woman come down Curtis Street big auto stop see Gor, say, "Hello, Gor. I love you. You marry me, harr, have lotta money? "[Bimeby?] Rockefeller! "Maybe I buy other picture Spouting Rock some day. I like that picture all right. All gone now. All time fellers go up woods get logs for fire, nobody cares, they come by all tired out, say, "Hey, Gor, all right I go your back-house? "I say, "Sure. "What the hell! Sometime I coming back from Rockport go up Forrest Street to Swede Fellers knock on door, say, "Hey, all right I go your back-house? "Feller says, "Sure. "With me all right sure. I never take picture from back-house. But by gosh some feller take that Spouting Rock picture from my back-house! "That morning after that [??] One morning I stay out my pots maybe ten eleven o'clock, have to throw most lobsters back, too short, take lobsters like that government feller give you hell all right sure. I hear fire-alarm blow. I hear lots things out like that. I hear bell on gas buoy, I hear people talk on shore. Sometimes I think I hear noises like old women going all time. I turn quick, I look bunch of gulls after boat fisherman cleaning fish. I do not like those gulls. Dirty. Eat anything. I tell you something. Never eat swordfish. Ask fisherman. He never eat swordfish. He knows. He catches swordfish, cuts him up, looks inside. Dirty. Like gulls. I don't like gulls. I like look at them sometimes in 3 fall wind blow in off harbor. Sometimes I think those gulls don't move at all. You can't tell to look. You think those gulls just sit on wind, harr!

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"Only bird I like is coot. I never catch coot, though. Costs too much for hunting license. I eat coot, though. After they cook it. You have to cook coot just right. Only Swede woman can cook coot. I see nice bird one time, though. Feller catch him down Halibut Point, big white owl caught in blue-berry bush his wing hurt. I do not like to see that big white owl

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his wing hurt. That feller tries to fix wing. Puts owl in chicken-house, puts sticks on wing with string. Nice owl. Big. Four feet up, I bet and maybe eight feet across. And clean under wings. Not dirty like owls around here and bats. All white. Clean. Feller says that owl come from way up north like seals. (Informant's nephew volunteers information that owl was Arctic Owl.) Last Spring we had seals down by break-water. They come with ice. Not scared. You go right up hit with oar. Got whiskers like old man. "That morning after that [Hallowe'en?] I come in maybe eleven o'clock after when I sell my lobsters Howard Hodgkins that Feller says, " Hey, Gor, you hear what happen, somebody kill Swede woman down Pigeon Hill Street? " Feller tell me all about it. Somebody goes in that Swede woman's house kill her set fire to house! That was fire-alarm I hear out in harbor. Hey, we have lot of noise after that. They get army down here, get whole American army. (Nephew interrupts to correct - a couple of hundred state troopers arrived to investigate crime and prevent possible sequel.) They come around every house, those soldiers and police, too. Fellers come from newspapers, too. Every day all over papers, "Murder in Rockport!" Everybody say he know who did it. Some say minister of Swedish Church. Some say Olson feller live across the street. Some say Olson feller's father. They go same church that woman, those Olsons. But they 4 do not kill that woman. They are Swede family. Police think maybe they do, though. In papers it tells police ask them questions. Police and army get all people go to that Swede Church there one night ask everybody questions. I do not go. I do not go to that church. I do not go to any church. But they ask me questions, too. Sure. They ask everybody in Rockport questions. They come right in house, look everywhere, say, " Who are you? Where were you that night? Who you think kill that woman, harr? " > * " Just like that for whole week. But they do not get feller kill that woman. One night they come down Curtis Street get poor drunk feller, send him to Bridgewater. But that is second Swede is killed around here and the police they do not get who did it. One time way before that Hallowe'en somebody kill Swede tailor feller right over on Main Street, Rockport. Right in day-time, too. Everybody say that Cregg he get the murderer. They say, " He could not put that Jessie Costello in jail and everybody sore. He better catch these murder all right, or he lose job. " But he don't catch murderer. And he

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don't lose job, too! Sometime I think, " Maybe, Gor, you could catch murderer. Maybe, you have some police, some money, you go around ask questions, write down what they say, maybe you find out, get a lot of money, maybe they make you G-man. " I got pretty good guess who kill a Swede people, anyway. I think maybe Finn people do it. Finn people do not like Swede fellers. I know some [Finn?] fellers they are all right. Some my friends they Finn fellers. But they do not like Swedes. Swedes bigger, smarter. Better quarry-workers, better fishermen, better lobsterman. And Swede fellers they do not get in fights like Finn fellers. Swedes much better people. Kinder people. You can tell people whether they good to dogs and cats. You never see Finn feller have dogs and cats. Swede fellers always. ?*? "Every summer summer people go away leave dogs and cats. People 5 find dogs, ship to summer people. But cats go wild. I got two cats go wild. Nice cats. Could not get them all, though. Sometime you go up old tracks to Lanesville back of Carl Storey's store. Maybe you see ten, fifteen cats, used to be people's cats, now live in woods wild. I do not like see cats live like that."